

REAL ESTATE GOSSIP

Work of Perfecting System of Streets and Avenues.

COST TO PROPERTY OWNER

Progress of Work Under the Street Extension Law.

NEW HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

What Is Being Done in Various Sections of the District and Beyond Boundary.

During the last session of Congress no less than twenty-five bills were passed providing for the extension of streets within the District forming a part of the city system which now extends throughout the entire territory. In volume certainly this record is ahead of anything of the sort that had been done by Congress. The previous year only four bills were passed, while before that they had only been occasional.

There are two considerations which probably explain the situation, and one is the growth of the city, which requires the facilities that additional and especially more direct means of communication afford and also which finds that such ends in streets are not desirable. The other reason why bills of this sort pass the Senate of Congress and survive the many perils in the pathway of legislation is an important one. In no instance do these measures require the expenditure of public money. Under the law all condemnation proceedings for acquiring land for use as public thoroughfares are at the expense of property holders, and from this source is drawn the money for the purchase of the land which is to be taken for the use of the public.

Action by a Jury.

According to the provisions of this legislation, a jury of citizens is summoned in each particular case, whose duty it is to determine the damages to individual property holders because of the taking of the land, or in other words, the value of the land under the existing circumstances. The jury is also required to ascertain whether the remaining property of the individual whose land is to be taken will be benefited by such action, and also to estimate as to the effect on other property holders in the vicinity. While the jury finds both benefits and damages, the former are supposed to exceed the latter, and a sufficient extent to pay not only for the property taken, but also for the expenses. During the present year a decision was rendered in the Supreme Court of the United States in the Newport street case, which involved the change of an alley into a minor street. The court held that to limit the benefits to the property holders in the square was inequitable and unjust, and that decision has served to check further consideration of similar cases.

Benefits and Damages.

It is the intention of the District authorities to recommend to Congress to provide an appropriation so that the District can pay out of the public funds an amount between the amount of the benefits as assessed and the damages and the cost of the proceeding. In this way such cases can be handled where the actual cost exceeds the benefits that can be assessed on the property.

Various street extension cases authorized at the last session of Congress were put in shape early last spring by Mr. E. M. Talbot, the engineer of streets, and under the various reasons only four or five of these cases have been submitted to juries. It is expected, however, that during the coming month or two these cases will be disposed of. Owing to the large number of these improvements which were authorized at the last session of Congress it is likely that there will be much done at the coming session. What is now to be done is principally in the way of extending short streets and doing away with dead ends, and in the way of perfecting what may be called some of the details in the highway system of the District.

South of the Capitol.

Improvements south of the Capitol building, and more especially in the vicinity of the new office building for the House of Representatives, might lead one to believe that the coming part of the year will be the most active in the history of the District, which occupies an entire square.

It fronts on New Jersey avenue between B and C streets, east, and at the northwest corner of that avenue and C street is the building known as the Varum Hotel, and which is under the management of the Government. It has been overhauled by Mr. Albert Curry and almost entirely remodeled.

The red brick front has been stuccoed and modernized, and the two buildings quite modernized that locality, where for so many years the outline of ancient buildings have given the place a certain character. The section was finished and nothing more was to be done.

Landmark Gone.

Still further to the east another ancient landmark has disappeared, or rather is doing so rapidly under the direction of Mr. John King, who is taking down the dwelling house that stood in the center of the square back of Providence Hospital, bounded by E, F, G and H streets, east.

It was known as the Nicholson house for the reason that it was occupied for a number of years by a family of that name. For years it has been the headquarters of the Nicholson family, and one of the best built up with dwellings. The old house stood in the middle of the square, and the fact of its removal was prevented.

Railroad Terminal Improvements.

The location of the Baltimore and Ohio freight yards and station at New York and Florida avenues northeast has caused a demand for business properties in that section. Quite recently the Terminal truck factory determined to build a large business building at 1st and I streets, northeast, and Swift & Co., the best packers in the city, have been selected to erect a large plant in that neighborhood.

In line with these improvements is the granting this week of a building permit to William E. Nash for the erection of a two-story brick laundry building at 1st and I streets, northeast, to be used by James P. Broadhead, late secretary and general manager of the Federal Pottery and Glass Company, who expects to install an up-to-date laundry plant, to be completed February 1. Plans for the building were prepared by Architect C. C. Gales, and are for a building of pre-proof construction, especially designed for laundry purposes. The building will contain 60,000 square feet of space, having a frontage of 100 feet on 1st street and a depth of 160 feet.

Easily Made Refrigerator.

Housekeepers who have only a small quantity of butter, milk or something like that, which they wish to keep cool for a few hours, need not worry themselves to make a refrigerator. A simple device can be made in a long, narrow box, such as a cigar box, and back again.

An excellent small capacity refrigerator can be made out of a twelve-inch flower pot. Put whatever is wanted in an inverted saucer, in a large dish or tray. Turn the flower pot over the saucer, and the water in the pot will run down into the tray until it is a half inch to an inch deep, and the thing is done.

The pot is porous and evaporates the water with sufficient rapidity to keep the interior perfectly cool and the plate of butter or bottle of milk will be as well preserved as though in a refrigerator.

LIME BETON IN USE

AN ENDURING MATERIAL FOR CONSTRUCTION WORK.

Another composition resembling concrete used in France, known as "beton," is thus described by Consul General R. P. Skinner of Marseille: "Lime beton has been in longer and more general use than cement concrete. It was a first-class material when made with ordinary masonry and sand, and hydraulic lime has been used in it better. It is a cheaper composition than cement beton or concrete, easier to work, and if the initial load be not too great it is for nearly every purpose just as good. A good lime beton can be obtained by mixing mortar and stones, gravel or cinders, mortar and good-sized stones making the best composition. Probably one-half of the houses in Marseille have been built of this material, and thousands of the older buildings, many hundred years old, are held together by ordinary lime. Walls built of ordinary lime must be laid up slowly, but in hydraulic lime beton they can be erected as fast as masons can work. The solidity of lime beton construction is shown by the sea walls and docks in Marseille, where the masonry of this kind may be seen both above and below sea water. The most difficult test to which building material can be subjected.

The lime beton is made by mixing a unit of sand and the two dry mixed. Water is added slowly with a sprinkler and the plastic consistency tested by forming a ball with the hand, which should exude a slight moisture, and being laid aside should neither flatten nor crack open. A mortar of 500 kilos (1,102 pounds) of lime to one cubic meter (1.358 cubic yards) of sand, mixed and beaten dry, has more resistance than an equal quantity of pure lime. A house-building mortar contains from 400 to 500 pounds of lime to one cubic meter (1.358 cubic yards) of sand. This is sufficient also for small arches and vaults. For tunnels, foundations, etc., the proportion of lime is increased by 100 pounds, while for important arches and dams subjected to pressure the amount of lime per cubic meter is from 600 to 750 pounds.

Mixture and Use of the Beton.

"Stones or other cheap material are mixed with the mortar, thus constituting the beton. Cinders, coke and furnace slag may be substituted for stones in ordinary house and wall work. If broken stone is used, the pieces are from 0.75 to 2.36 inches in length. The proportions are usually two parts of stone for one part of mortar for work under water; in open air work the proportion of stone may be increased.

"For open-air work a sifter or mold is built into which the beton is poured in horizontal layers and laid up like brick, each layer being rammed. A layer of beton cannot be distributed above another which has already set until its surface has been picked and washed and finally given a coat of cement and water of the consistency of cream.

In both France and Germany a light-weight beton is made of cinders. Buildings several stories in height can be erected of this cinder beton, which can be laid in the other cases and is made of cinders and cement. One-story structures require no anchorage bars. Several very large factories have been built at Lyons of this beton. Sometimes the cinders are of large size and laid up like brick and stone. In all cases the cinders must be screened and then mixed at the rate of one cubic yard of beton to one cubic yard of cinders. The beton is made of 400 pounds of hydraulic lime to thirty-five cubic feet of sand, or the lime can be replaced by 300 pounds of Portland cement. The proportion of mortar can be changed slightly if the materials are good.

The striking economies effected in France are obtained by the free use of cheap local material, whatever it may be, and by the equally free use of lime where cement probably would be used in the other cases. The work is carefully planned and performed hardly more lime is needed than if cement were used, and whereas a good Portland cement now costs but \$3.50 per ton, in the rural districts the peasants use any kind of delirium. He seemed glad to get back to the safe shelter of his pen in the stable yard, but whereas the poor beast had up to the time of his outing been confiding and familiar in his ways, his expert new master, the man in the street, had made him timid and shy.

Mr. Jones, who was head gamekeeper to the late Lord Lilford for nearly fifty years, told me of a tame fox that he kept chained to a tree close to his house. It seemed well contented there, but as Lord Lilford thought it ought to have its freedom it was taken in a bag to a wood and turned out there. The poor beast tried to follow the keeper home again, and it was with difficulty got rid of, only to be taken by a stranger and killed soon after.

STORIES OF FOXES.

One Made a Playmate of a Bulldog; Another Refused to Be Lost.

From the Pall Mall Gazette.

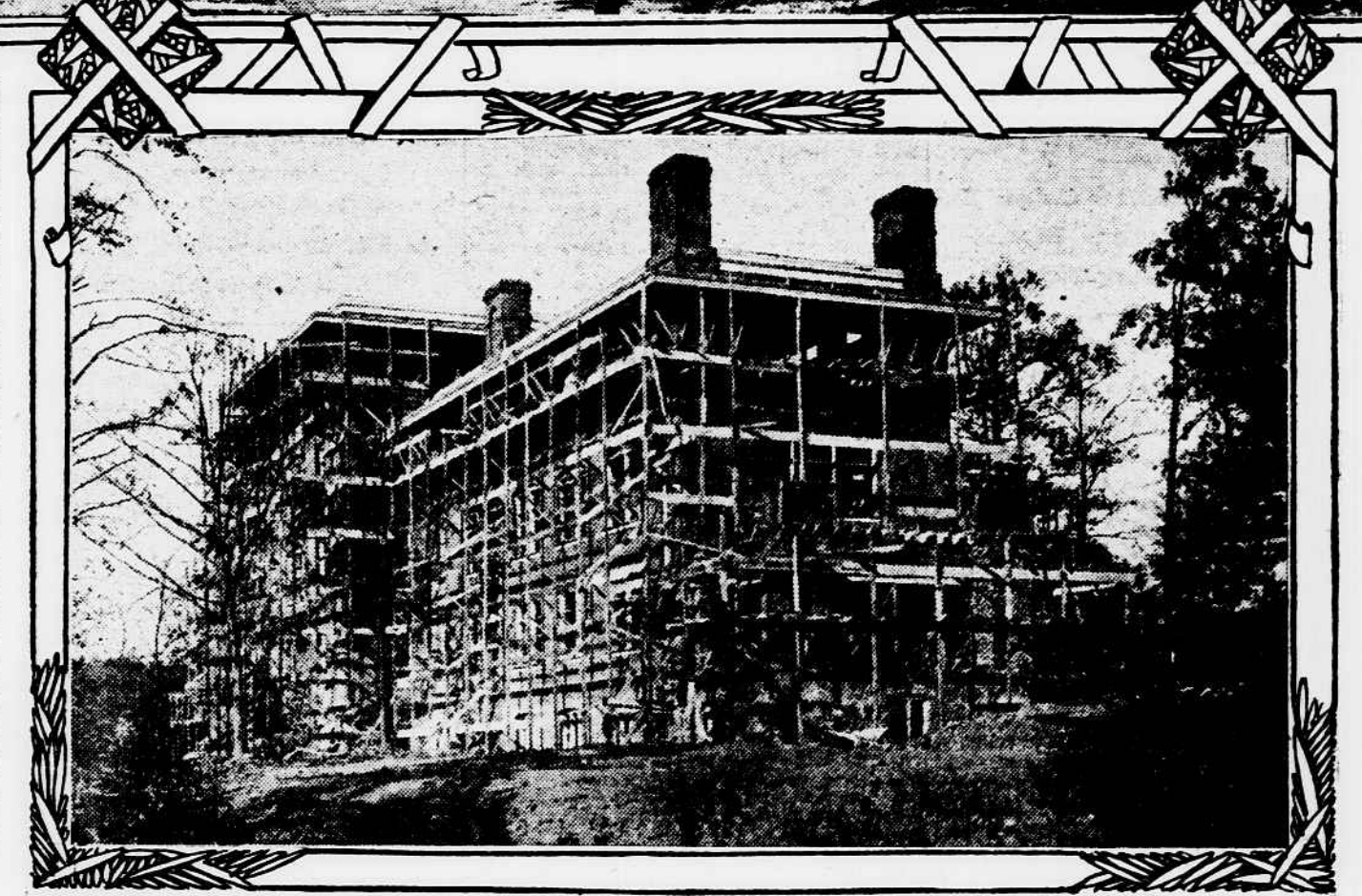
A friend of mine in the Midlands, a young doctor with natural history proclivities, has two young foxes in a roomy pen in his stable yard. They were taken from the earth in a private wood, within reach of which there is no hunt. One of the pair managed to get out of bounds lately, and becoming bewildered by the traffic in the main street of the busy little market town it ran hither and thither, a terror to some and the butt of others, who tried their best to kill the poor beast. The fox, however, got the better of all its pursuers and ran off into what is locally termed "the upper country" beyond, so that all trace of it was lost until the groom who had been attached to the little beast, and who had happy inspiration to take on the bull terrier in search of its playmate.

Bully did in the direction of a park four miles away, and within its gates the terrier quickened his pace, and barking loudly was soon decreed by the fox who ran up to his friend with great show of delight. He seemed glad to get back to the safe shelter of his pen in the stable yard, but whereas the poor beast had up to the time of his outing been confiding and familiar in his ways, his expert new master, the man in the street, had made him timid and shy.

It has been estimated that 1,000 pounds of tobacco are thrown away every day in the shape of unconsumed ends of cigars and cigarette.

AT FIFTEENTH AND E STREETS SOUTHEAST.

NEW MUNICIPAL HOSPITAL AS IT APPEARS TODAY.



FOR OFFICE BUILDINGS.

Changes to Be Made by the Firm of Muir & Co.

It is understood that Mr. Thomas F. Walsh has decided to abandon the idea of building on the property owned by him at the northwest corner of 14th street and New York avenue. In view of this decision on the part of Mr. Walsh extensive repairs have been made in the Oxford Hotel, occupying the corner, the interior of the building and the furnishings have been renovated throughout. The buildings owned by Mr. Walsh extending from 1402 to 1407 New York avenue, have been leased by the firm of Charles S. Muir & Co. for a term of years, and the company named has decided to make a number of extensive repairs to the buildings with a view to remodeling them for use as modern offices.

DUST ON THE ROADS

Motor Cars Have Increased the Nuisance.

From the Engineering Record.

Dust prevention and road destruction in and about Boston have been receiving the attention of the Massachusetts highway commission, the Metropolitan park commission and the Boston park commission, and so many experiments are being made on a large scale that before long it is reasonable to expect some valuable information will be obtained. The work is particularly interesting on account of the extensive use of automobile in the Boston district, and the consequent destructive travel on most of the good roads in that vicinity. One of the most thorough tests is being made by the Metropolitan park commission on the Revere Beach parkway. A portion of this well-known roadway was treated with tarvia last year and another portion has been similarly treated this year. The procession of motor cars along this parkway is a close one at certain times of every pleasant day, and the effect of the treatment in preventing dust and the destruction of the road is consequently being determined with unusual thoroughness. In places the roadway which was treated last year has gone to pieces, raveling out somewhat like an ordinary broken-stone road in very dry and windy weather. The surface shows a considerable quantity of loosened stones, but even there the road is practically dustless. The latter condition has been obtained without the use of any special treatment, and the application of the tarvia, which is a considerable expense, is being applied to the treated roadway, while about Boston a heavy coat of screenings seems to be the only way to keep the road surface from being soiled by the dust of the motor cars.

CONCRETE ROOFS.

Found to Be Adaptable for Use in India.

A very useful and interesting note on the problem of roofs in the United Provinces of India has been written by Mr. H. S. Wildeblood, superintendent engineer, at present under secretary to the government of India in the P. W. D. The question of the best form of roof for the plains of India, says the Indian Engineer, has lately been engaging the attention of the engineers of these provinces, and though the matter is still more or less at an experimental stage, certain definite conclusions have been arrived at, and the object of this note is, the writer says, to help junior officers who are interested in the subject and who are willing to profit from experiments carried out by their predecessors without waste of time in traversing old ground. The writer also expresses the hope that it may lead to an exchange of ideas on this and kindred subjects, which would be of interest to the consulting architect in the United Provinces, and to those who are making a study of the improvement of house building in India, though Mr. Wildeblood's note deals only with one small part of the larger question.

The writer briefly traces the history of the various forms of roof in use from the last century to the present, and makes to effect improvements in this direction. The serious disadvantages, not the least of which is its high cost, of the "rick arch" roof, perhaps the most permanent form of roof construction known till recently, are very clearly brought out. The writer then goes on to explain that the introduction in Europe and America of reinforced concrete gave engineers in India the idea of improving their roofs by means of this most useful form of construction. The experiments which have been carried out, and which are described in the note, have been attended by the most satisfactory results, and he gives to the reinforced concrete roof is by far and away the best in every way. It was found that with forty parts of the ordinary pure kankar (lime mortar) to one part of concrete, the roof was last, broken to a gauge of one inch, a concrete roof eight inches thick, with seven strands wire running through it at intervals of a foot, and having a span of six feet between joists, was capable of bearing distributed loads of over 900 pounds to the square foot. Larger spans, which are not uncommon in India, have been tried. Roofs made thus of reinforced concrete proved cheaper than those of jack arches, and that ceilings can easily be given to the rooms by merely plastering the lower surface of the concrete slabs, while expansion joints, which are necessary to prevent irregular cracking, are not known to be a disadvantage. The concrete roof has also been proved to be infinitely cooler than the jack arch, or any other form of roof in use in India, and it is found that the chief function of the roof is to shade the walls of the main building at a minimum of cost. The light sloping roof of "rick arch" on angle steel battens, resting on steel joist rafters and light stone, or where stone is too expensive, cast-iron columns, is recommended.

The Sultan of Morocco's Little Ruse.

From P. T. O.

John H. Avery, who for two years instructed the Sultan of Morocco in the art of photography, says that although most of the sultan's spare time has been spent with Europeans, he has never neglected the needs of the women in his vast harem. He had motors brought out to Fez palace for their use, and Mr. Avery himself was asked to arrange moving pictures for the ladies' benefit. The women attend in batches, so that he had a different audience each evening. Of course, he was never permitted to look upon a single lady, but he showed them in a kind of double room by throwing the pictures through a narrow doorway guarded by eunuchs. But of these evenings the sultan himself took part. The ladies did not, however, so far as peace sultan Mulek Abdel Aziz resorted to a ruse.

When Mr. Avery had run off a score of pictures, the sultan would whisper, "Avery, after the next I will cry out, 'More, yet more!' But you must answer in Arabic, 'Nay, great lord, all is finished for this night.' There will be more tomorrow, if God will it." And so this farce was gone through. On Mr. Avery's halting reply, Abdel Aziz, in his role of peeped husband, would call out to the harem ladies, "There, there, you see Feza Avery will show you no more tonight, so you must all go off to bed."

The Woodcock's Ear.

From the Big Run Tribune.

C. W. Whymper of Big Run has just returned to notice a curious point with regard to the position of the ear in the woodcock. The snipe, it may be remembered, is remarkable for the fact that the external ear is placed under, instead of behind, the eye, as in other birds; but in the woodcock it is placed in front of the eye, and more so on one side of the head than on the other. This lack of symmetry, furthermore, extends to the shape of the aperture, which is different on the two sides of the head.

Too Many Toots.

From Outdoor Life.

A woman on the train entering Grand Rapids asked the conductor how long the cars stopped at Union station. He replied: "Madam, we stop just four minutes, from two to two to two two." The woman turned to her companion and said: "I wonder if he thinks he's the whistle on the engine."

Kings as Linguists.

From The Bits.

The next best linguist to the king among those sitting upon European thrones is the pope, who speaks French, English, Italian, Spanish, and Latin, and who also speaks excellent English, although he has never been able to rid himself of a strong German accent. But the emperor employs a foreign tongue only in his relations with the pope, and of nobles oblige, and even with the kings of the Balkans, including the language of the pope, the emperor speaks French, German, the kings of Spain and Italy are also good linguists, and among the queens and princesses of Europe the talent for languages is quite extraordinary, and adds greatly to the grace and charm of modern court life.

FREE FROM POLITICS

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT AND THE BEST RESULTS.

The current number of Municipal Engineering Magazine contains some pertinent comments on the effect of politics upon the subordinates in municipal offices. The author, Mr. M. K. Sherford, says:

"To obtain the best results in handling the important problems which confront the smallest as well as the largest of our municipalities, politics should be eliminated from their consideration. It is not meant in using this expression to convey the idea that tenure of office is the controlling thought. A broad view would suggest that as a most effective and stable method of arriving at the best results the municipal officer himself and particularly the heads of the engineering departments of our city governments should strive continually and disinterestedly to eliminate politics from their office, beginning with his own consideration of municipal affairs as shown in his official reports and advice. An esprit de corps can be established in the engineering department of a municipal government, if properly fostered, which should result in an efficient management of this branch of municipal affairs, and which is obtained in a large private corporation.

"It must be admitted that it is difficult, and some may say it is impossible, that the plans and the engineering department of a municipal government, if properly fostered, which should result in an efficient management of this branch of municipal affairs, and which is obtained in a large private corporation.

"The building formerly occupied by the Post Office Department, at the corner of 14th street and New York avenue, is being used by the city as a public building. The interior Department building, with its high ceilings and more commodious position, does not appear to be a like advantage. The Treasury Department building is a gloomy one at night, and the Pennsylvania avenue building at night serves to intensify rather than dispel the shadows.

Lights in the Parks.

"There seems to be a disposition in all cities for those having such matters in charge to be chary with illuminations in parks—the very places where the lights should be of the best and most liberally placed—and this city is no exception.

MOISTURE IN WOOD.

Gain in Strength as Dryness Is Attained.

The effect of water in softening organic tissue, as in wetting a piece of paper or a sponge, is well known, and so is the stiffening effect of drying. The same law applies to wood. By different methods of seasoning to pieces of the same stock may be given very different degrees of strength.

Wood in its green state contains moisture in the pores of the cells, like honey in a comb, and also in the substance of the cells. As the wood dries, the moisture is driven out, and the pores are first evaporated, and then the substance of the cells is lessened the weight of the wood, but does not affect its strength. It is not until the moisture in the substance of the cells is driven out that the strength of the wood begins to increase. Scientifically, this point is known as the "moisture-saturation point." From this point on, as the wood dries, the strength of the wood begins to increase.

When, in drying, the fiber-saturation point is reached, the strength of the wood increases as drying progresses, in accordance with a definite law, and this law can be used to calculate from the moisture content of a piece of wood the gain in the strength of wood is somewhat remarkable. In the case of spruce, the strength is multiplied four times, and in the case of oak, it is multiplied three times. The strength of wood, when dried in an oven, is as strong, weight for weight, as steel. Even after the reabsorption of moisture, when the moisture content is 15 per cent, the strength of the sticks is still from 5 to 15 per cent greater than when it was green.

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Manufacturers, who know only the strength, but the weakness, of the materials they use, and for this reason they are quite as much interested in knowing how the materials are affected by moisture as they are in knowing how they are weak by knots, checks, cross grain and other defects. It is obvious that the strength of the materials will be weakened by excessive moisture; they will have to be used in larger sizes for safety. So far, engineers of timber posts, who are showing that the green state is absolute dryness, do not advise counting on the same results in the seasoning of large timbers, owing to the fact that the large timbers usually found in the market have defects which are sure to counterbalance the gain from seasoning.

No Smoking on the Cruise.

From the San Francisco Chronicle.

The Standard Oil steamer Seminole, which arrived here yesterday from the Gulf of Mexico, is the largest cargo ship ever carried across the Pacific, and the first of its kind. The Seminole is loaded with bauxite in bulk. In the great tanks below the oil ship's decks are 6,000 tons of the spirit that makes the automobiles move, enough of it, if exploded, to fracture the San Francisco to the vicinity of the Farallones.

With this magazine of potential destruction below decks, the Seminole weathered a terrific typhoon which brought all on board face to face with the heretofore untold terrors of the sea. The ship was from the inflammable cargo, and from skipper to messboy not a soul on board has been allowed to smoke since the storm broke. The bauxite was refined from Sumatra oil, and is the first bulk cargo of the spirit ever brought to this port.

Kings as Linguists.

From The Bits.

The next best linguist to the king among those sitting upon European thrones is the pope, who speaks French, English, Italian, Spanish, and Latin, and who also speaks excellent English, although he has never been able to rid himself of a strong German accent. But the emperor employs a foreign tongue only in his relations with the pope, and of nobles oblige, and even with the kings of the Balkans, including the language of the pope, the emperor speaks French, German, the kings of Spain and Italy are also good linguists, and among the queens and princesses of Europe the talent for languages is quite extraordinary, and adds greatly to the grace and charm of modern court life.

MORE LIGHT NEEDED

Some Public Buildings Which Look Gloomy at Night.

COMMENT ON CONDITIONS

Believed Public Grounds Should Be More Liberally Supplied.

UNION STATION ENVIRONMENT

Attractiveness of the City Could Be Enhanced by More Attention to Illumination.

The streets of Washington may be said to be well lighted at night, since marked a local artist, "particularly since the new model street lamp with its manifold advantages has been in use, there are points where the illumination of the main thoroughfares, parks and public buildings which invite comment.

"The public buildings are not, of course, under the control of the city authorities, and several of these huge structures present a dark and gloomy appearance after nightfall. This is particularly true of the massive State, War and Navy building. The square upon which this imposing pile of granite is situated is one of the darkest in the city, though it is broad and fronting upon the principal avenue. While it is true that the building is not in use for official purposes at night, nevertheless its four main entrances, flanking upon many streets, well illuminated with tastefully arranged electric lights, and the building, by its pleasing contrast with present conditions, and the cost, in the general item of the maintenance of the building, too small to be counted.

Library Illuminations.

"The electrical exterior illuminations of the Congressional Library, to my mind, lend an added charm to the beautiful structure, and are in themselves worth a trip to see. The utilitarian and artistic purposes of the lights are provided for, and the grand staircase, with its broad, winding steps leading up to the main entrance, is an impressive sight to stranger and citizen alike.

This being the capital of the nation, a little extra expenditure of effort and money in the illumination of the public buildings might be entered into, particularly since many of them have their own individual lighting plants.

"The lighting of the Capitol grounds has been greatly improved, but additional lights could be placed to advantage in the immediate vicinity of the Capitol building, particularly while the terraces on the west side are so situated that more abundant illumination would add very greatly to their effectiveness.

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